TO

The ever Honour'd

OHN APPLETRE, Esq;

High Sheriff

FOR THE

ounty of *Worcester.*

IR,

HE *pious and generous Founder of Two well endowed Schools your County and Neighbourhood, destly declining any Dedication to yself, chooſing rather, as ſilently*

as may be, to convey his Charity in ou
the Corban, *than be flatter'd with t* ob
fulsome noise of a Pharisaical Trum isi
pet, I presume to offer these cru be
mean Conceptions to the Auditors ra
them, under the shelter and Patr nd
nage of your Name. The only M re
tive to the rudeness of this Addres m
took its Rise from the well known Ca .
dor and Ingenuity, which have gai A
ed you such an Universal, and inde f
deserved esteem, from all that have t h
Honour to be of your Acquaintan us
and make me presume upon an ea es
Pardon. en

The Subject I treat upon is, I co t
fess, Divine and Noble, and I a nd
Conscious enough, is very much deb e
ted and desecrated by my weak m Na
nagement of it: But as one sign In
Property of Charity is, that it cove ou
a multitude of Errors, *so I fre* Ch
confess my self to stand as much fe
want of that, as any Man that Breat Fr
and beg a large share of it from s t
Candid and Christian Readers. I m

do

oubt but he bestows his Wealth to the oblest purposes, who thus makes Provision for the good of Posterity, by a beral Education *of Youth in good Literature, and a due sense of Religion nd Vertue, which may in some meare rescue our vulgar* Herd, *from that mentable state of Brutality they live .*

And this I am certain is the sole aim f our Honourable Patron, *as appearth by that cautious, discreet, and pius Care he hath taken in all the Artiles of his* Feofment, *which are as well en'd, and as excellently contrived,* the Wit of Man can invent: *nd it is a flagrant shame to the Age e live in, that Charities of so useful a Nature, purely design'd to promote the Universal Good of* Mankind, *the Hoour of* God, *and the Interest of his* Church, *should be so generally neglected and perverted by the Supineness of Trustees, or the Futility of Pedagogues, s they are: And this, (whatever they magine) is one considerable* Stew-

ardſhip, *for which they will one d*
be called to Account; *for they con*
der not the unſpeakable wrong and m
chief that they do to the World, by d
couraging many opulent and Hon
Gentlemen from Acts of Piety, (
who will be forward to give, wh
he beholds the Gift of others abu
before his Face?) *not to menti*
the horrid injury that they do to po
Lads, *by the open neglect, or ill m*
nagement of their Duty; *which is*
notorious a breach of Truſt, and
unpardonable a Crime, that I can't i
vent a Name hard *enough for it.*

But our great and excellent Ben
factor, hath taken all imaginable Ca
to Nominate and Appoint ſo many Pe
ſons of Honour and Worth for his Tr
ſtees, as 'tis to be hoped, will for ev
ſecure his Noble Charities from the D
predations of Knaves *and* Villains.
will not trouble you with a Tale, by ho
many odd Accidents, the followi
Papers *have been detained ſo lo*
fro

from the Preſs, nor how I came to be unhappily pitch'd upon for a Diſcourſe of ſo publick a Nature.

But as I am more fatigued with Buſineſs, than any Clergy-man in the three Kingdoms, (and as little Rewarded for it, God help the while!) ſo no man can reaſonably expect from me, any accuracy of Compoſure, or elaborate Periods. Beſides, that I am miſerably unſpirited by misfortunes, that are like to accompany me to my Grave. But I am at honeſt Horace's *Word, with whoſe excellent Wit and Morality I ſometimes divert my diſcontented Hours.*

——————— ——meâ. *Hor. Car. Lib. 3. O. 29.*
Virtute me involvo, probamque
Pauperiem ſine Dote quæro:

Thus craving your Candor, in the reading of the following Pages, and your Pardon for this Rudeneſs, and

begging God's everlasting Blessing upo the Foundation and the Founder, subscribe my self with all Sincerity,

Honour'd Sir,

Your most Obedient,

And Humble Servant,

July 7th, 1697.

Rich. Croft.

The Wiſe Steward.

Being a

SERMON

Preached the

Thurſday *in* Whitſon-week,

1696. *&c.*

Luke XVI. 9.

Make to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlaſting Habitations.

WHICH Text is the cloſe and Application of an Excellent Parable, from which our Saviour in a lively manner

ner repreſents to his numerous an captious *Hearers*, the fearful Ha zards that a careleſs and dedolent *Im penitent* expoſeth himſelf to, by th Example of an extravagant and un thinking *Steward*, who having un worthily abuſed his Truſt, and ru his *Lord* conſiderably into Debt had yet been ſo extreamly Impro vident, as not to lay up a Far thing for himſelf, againſt a *rain Day.*

His *Lord* at laſt having receive ſome hint of his fraudulent Practi ſes, and expenſive way of Living calls haſtily upon him to give u his *Accounts*, to quit his Service an provide for himſelf. The *Steward* amazed at this unexpected and rigi Summons, begins to take a confu ſed view of that forlorn Condition he had plunged himſelf into, by his former Improvidence and Ri ots; and is at his Wits end, to think what will become of him, when he ſhall be Caſhiered from his gainful Office,

ſe 1*ſt*, 1 2*d*.

Office, and turned Naked into the World, to ſcramble for a Livelihood, who for a long time had lived in all the ſoftneſs of a Luxurious Plenty, at another Man's Coſt. He was of too delicate and nice a Conſtitution to labour for his Bread; *I cannot dig*; and of too haughty a Spirit to Petition for it; *To beg I am aſhamed.* *Verſe* 3.

To prevent both which Miſchiefs, he reſolveth at laſt to palm a notorious Cheat upon his *Lord*; to ſhew him one more Trick, and ſerve his Neceſſities by a clearer piece of *Knavery*: And that was, to oblige ſome that were largely Indebted to his Maſter, and behind hand in their Rents, as well as he was in his Accounts; all of which he ſendeth for in his Surprize, and abateth to every one of them very conſiderable Sums, in hopes, that having thus relieved them under their *Neceſſities*, and ſet them upright in the World, they alſo would conſider

ſider him, and afford him ſome competent Livelihood, when he was to be *turn'd* off from his *Lord*, and left Naked and helpleſs in an unhoſpitable World.

His *Lord* not a little Vexed to ſee himſelf ſo palpably abuſed, and left without any hopes to Right himſelf, yet could not but commend the *Wit* and Cunning of this *unjuſt* 8. *Steward*, becauſe he had *acted wiſely*; This is the whole ſcope and ſubſtance of the *Parable*, of which my Text is the Application. *I ſay unto you, make to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlaſting habitations.*

Nor may it be amiſs, if I ſtep a little out of my way, to obſerve the excellent Scituation of this *Parable* betwixt two others; which by *vulgar People*, are generally better known than underſtood; that of the *Prodigal Son*, in the cloſe of the foregoing

going Chapter, and that of the ſe-
ſure and profligate *Glutton* in the
end of this Chapter, with the Para-
ble from which I borrowed my Text
in the midſt betwixt both.

The *Prodigal* young Gentleman had unwiſely ſquandred away his Fortune, which had been provided for him, by the Prudence and Induſtry of a kind and careful Father; and in a trice had reduced himſelf to the extreameſt Want and Beggary; to keep a heard of Swine for a poor contemptible Livelihood; to Feaſt with them, and glad of their Leavings too. Yet this great Happineſs even his Miſeries produced, that they made him wiſely look back upon his former Follies, and work in him a Repentance to Salvation, never to be Repented of.

The unjuſt *Steward* in my Text, revelled at the Coſt of another Man, waſted the Goods, and ſpent the Subſtance of his *Lord*; but having a Warning, tho' a very ſhort one, to

to give up his *Accounts*, and quit h
Office, wisely prevented all Fears o
a future Misery, by a seasonable Pro
vision against that Storm, which h
perceived just falling upon hi
Head.

se 19, &c. The *Rich Man*, had vast Inheri
tances, was *delicately Cloathed*, an
fared Sumptuously every day; an
thus abusing both himself and th
Blessings of *Heaven*, he was snatch
ed away into Eternal Flames, with
out the Ceremony of a Summons
or the Prologue of a Disease
where the most indulgent Fathe
that ever lived, at his most earnes
and repeated Sollicitations, would
se 24. not afford him a *drop of Water to coo
his flaming Tongue.*

Thus this wise and learned *Evan
gelist* hath placed these Parables, in
an excellent and inimitable Me
thod; and, as 'tis said in another
Case, so we may truly say in this,
those whom the *Holy Ghost*, which
guided his Pen, hath *joined to
gether*,

ether, it *is not lawful for us to put ſunder.*

For is it not the frequent Folly of moſt Men (tho' in other reſpects of admirable Parts and Prudence, yet) when they have wearied themſelves in the intolerable Slavery of Wickedneſs, and their expenſive Sins have reduced them to the utmoſt Neceſſity or Miſery, with an unaccountable Preſumption, to lay deſperate hold upon the Parable of the *Prodigal Son?* Do we not find, that ſinners of the moſt infamous Character, *bottom* all their Religion and reſolution upon this one Parabolical, and therefore unconcluding Example? That when they are reduced to the loweſt Extremity, and to the very Agonies of Death, they will, with him, ariſe and go to their Father, (marry that they will!) and with a bold, I confeſs, but unwarrantable Faith conclude, that they alſo ſhall find all that Mercy and Compaſſion which he did.

Our

Our *Blessed Saviour* therefore, wh
spake *as never Man spake*, immed
ately subjoyns this other Parable o
the *unjust Steward*, to instruct u
what Dangers we expose our selv
to, and what Hazzards we run, whe
we thus disingenuously affront ou
Lord, and delude our selves, b
deferring our Repentance till Mis
ry *rusheth upon us like an armed man*
For if he had not been Nimble a
well as cunning, in the managemen
of his Declining Fortunes, it woul
not have fared with him as it di
with the happy *Prodigal*, but in
stantly he would have been turne
helpless and naked, to that Labou
which he could not, and that infa
mous Poverty, which he so muc
disdained to undergo.

Not that our *Saviour* recommend
the Villany and Fraud of this un
just *Steward* to us, but only his Fore
sight and Policy; that we shoul
learn from his Example, to call ou
selves to an impartial and timel
Accoun

Account, *before we go hence, and ſhall be no more ſeen:* To think very frequently and very ſeriouſly, upon a Matter of ſuch mighty Importance, as *Eternal Life* is; and cry out with him, *What ſhall I do?* My Lord is juſt turning me out of my Stewardſhip; I muſt quit this Life, and bid a final adieu to the World, to day perchance; and at the fartheſt it will be but a few Days, e're I ſhall be gone. *Verſe*

And indeed, the *great and wiſe God* we ſerve, never yet gave us one inſtance that may encourage us to reckon our Life by Years, but rather by Days and Minutes. We read but of one Perſon that indiſcreetly Poſt-poned the weighty Concerns of *Eternal Life*; and vainly boaſted of many Years of *Eaſe* and *Plenty*; and all that he got by it, was the blunt Character of a *Fool*. And the truth of it is, that for a Creature endued with *Reaſon*, and profeſſing the Holy Faith of *Chap.* 19.

Chriſtianity, to be continually Progging for the Fleſh, and Toiling in a weariſom Purſuit, after empty and cloying Pleaſures, is ſuch an unaccountable thing, that no Madneſs in the World is comparable to it.

No! 'Thus hitherto have I li-
'ved, thus vainly waſted my time,
'and worn out my Life in Trifles,
'and things that turn to no Ac-
'count at all: I have impaired my
'Health, reduced my ſelf, as to all
'the purpoſes of a Holy Life, to
'perfect Beggary, and ſtrongly
'miſimployed all the Noble Facul-
'ties of my Body and Soul, in a
'fooliſh Compliance with my own
'deprav'd extravagant Humors,
'meerly to give my ſelf a poor and
'meager Satisfaction, from the emp-
'ty Pleaſures of a few Hours: And
'what ſhall I do, if my Lord
'ſhould, as in Juſtice he may, call
'me to a haſty Account, and rigid-
'ly demand how I have demeaned

'my

my ſelf in his Service? with what Fidelity and Conſcience I have diſcharged that Duty, that indiſpenſable Duty, which I owe to him and my own Soul? I have nothing to Reply, but muſt in reaſon expect the utmoſt of his Severity.

Thus it becomes wiſe and conſidering Men, cooly to debate and conſider, how Affairs ſtand betwixt *God* and *Themſelves*; and never leave off the Argument, till they take up with the happy and timely Wiſdom of this unjuſt Steward, *I am reſolved what to do:* 'I will e'en *Verſe* 4. ſhake off thoſe coſtly and troubleſome Sins which do ſo eaſily beſet me; I will forthwith become a Proſelite to a virtuous and religious Life; and whilſt I live, will be endeavouring to promote the Honour of God, and the Salvation of my Soul; and by Acts of Piety and Beneficenſe, ſecure to my ſelf ſuch Friends, as ſhall be

'effectual *Advocates* and Patron
'for me, when the great *Landlord*
'of all the World ſhall call me to
'Account.

But as wiſe as this Steward was, we find him extreamly out in one moſt conſiderable Circumſtance, in an unwiſe Procraſtination of his Induſtry and good Husbandry, till the very moment of his *Lord's coming upon him*, with a *Give an Account of thy Stewardſhip, for thou ſhalt be no longer Steward.*

And is not this the deplorable Folly of moſt Men, that they entertain ſuch cold and languid Opinions of Eternal Life, and their own immortal Souls, as ſcarce once to think of ſtating their Accounts with *God*, till they are juſt hurrying to their Graves, and taking an everlaſting Farewel of the World, and all thoſe Pleaſures which they ſo unwiſely Courted, and ſo paſſionately Doted upon.

Therefore

Therefore our Saviour adds a third *Parable* to his Hearers, which if it were well digeſted, would awaken and fright the moſt obdurate Sinner to ſomething of Thoughtfulneſs and Reſolution: That of a *rich Glutton*, who fared *deliciouſly every day*, and was a bold Contemner both of GOD and Man, who had no kind Admonition before hand, no Summons to prepare him for his Audit, as this *Steward* had; no pinching Affliction, or ſevere Poverty to laſh him home to his *Father*, as the *Prodigal* had, but was ſnapt away in an unthought of Moment, in the midſt of his Riot and Luxuries, and went down Quick into Everlaſting Flames.

Thus is our *great and wiſe God*, to returning Sinners, an indulgent and tender Father; to dilatory Delinquents, an auſtere and rigid Maſter; and to an incorrigible Impenitent, a ſevere and terrible Judge. No coſtly Sacrifice that

we can offer is ſo acceptable to God
51.17. as *a broken and contrite Heart.* A mournful Convert makes *joy in Heaven*; and the *Father of mercies and God of all conſolation*, is more ready to *receive* us, than we are to *return* to him. *I will ariſe and go to my*
p. 15. 21, &c. *father*, ſays the Son, but the Father *run to meet* him. The young Gentleman Curb'd by fear and ſhame march'd but ſlowly on in his Reſolutions, to proſtrate himſelf for an undeſerved Pardon; but the *aged Father* trudges on apace, *runs to him*, falls *upon his neck*, *kiſſeth him.* O the depth of the Goodneſs and Mercies of God! What ingenuous Temper would not this Example invite? What Sinner ſo ſtubborn and ill-natured, but it would conſtrain to Repentance?

But if all the Compaſſions of the *Almighty*, and the *Bowels* and Condeſcenſions of a gracious Father ſhall be treated with ſcorn, and diſdainful Neglect, or with an indiſcree

diſcreet and ſinful Confidence, too much preſumed upon: Then comes in this other Parable, which repreſents him to us, as a *juſt* and *terrible Judge*, that will in an inſtant require our Accompts, and diſcharge us of his Service; who, if we trifle with Religion, and ſet at naught his Counſels, will come in a day and an hour when we look not for him, will cut us aſunder, and doom us to the rich Gluttons Fate, where our Condition will be Remedileſs, Intolerable and Eternal.

'Tis therefore the beſt advice that ever was given, and the beſt that we can take, which our S[illegible]*iour raiſes* by way of *Application* from the whole, That we would ſo far Conſult our own Intereſt and Eternal Good, as to learn one great Inſtance of Prudence, from *the children of the world, who are wiſer in their generation than the children of light.* Tho' Profligate and Caſt-aways, can by no means be prevailed upon

to comply with the ſober and advan- tagious Dictates of God and Con- ſcience; yet we muſt be inſtructed in one main Point of Wiſdom and Conduct, even from them, and learn as *Innocence from Doves*, ſo *Wiſdom* even from *Serpents*; and that is to make to our ſelves Friends of the *unrighteous Mammon*, *that when we fail*, they *may receive us into everlaſting Habitations*.

I muſt confeſs, that the Reſolution which this unjuſt Steward ſo haſtily took up with, was very far from the ſafe and honourable Track of Honeſty, and may be mentioned with the reſt of his fraudulent Practiſes; nay perhaps, as it was the laſt, ſo the moſt Notorious Cheat that he had been Guilty of when he had bubled his Lord ſo much, and ſo long before, to give him ſuch a clear wipe at his going off too; and yet our Saviour Extracts the wholſomeſt Advice in the

e World from it: In theſe Three llowing Particulars.

I. That we ſhould be provident make to our ſelves *Friends*, and ch as may ſtand us in ſtead, when l things elſe ſhall *fail* and forſake s.

II. That we be Induſtrious, but oneſt, in uſing our utmoſt endea- ours to promote them.

III. To inſtruct us in the vaſt dvantages of this Wiſdom, *That we may be received into everlaſting abitations.*

Makes to your ſelves friends of the I. *righteous Mammon.*

And little doubt can be made, but at they abound in Friends who ave *Mammon* on their ſide: Who ver complain'd for want of them, hilſt Fan'd with a pleaſant Gale of pulency and Proſperity? Yet, alas!) ſuch as hang and fawn up- n us, merely becauſe we are Rich

or

or Noble, and of a considera
Station in the World, prove
miserable Comforters in an Ebb of
Fortune. Of such Friends
had more then enough, when
was the greatest Man in all the E
then *the aged stood up before him, Pr*
ces refrain'd talking, and laid th
hands upon their mouths, the no
Job 29. 8, 9, 10, &c. *held their peace, they waited for me*
for the rain, &c.

Then there was an Emulati
amongst his numerous Followe
who shou'd pay him the lowest H
mage, every one contending h
to comply with his Inclinatio
and how to gratifie him in eve
Circumstance of his Life. But wh
a stern Providence had strip'd h
Naked as he was born, and Lodg
him upon a loathsome Dungh
how bitterly does that Righte
Person complain of their revolt
Unkindness? *Miserable Comfort*
ye are all, like the Brooks of *Te*
(to use his own elegant Compa
so

n) which, when there was no
ant of *Water prodigally overflowed*
eir Banks, but in a parching Drought
forded not a Drop to quench the
inting Traveller's Thirst. In my
ll Tide of Prosperity, as he bitterly
mplains, you, and who but you,
ere my Friends? when I stood in Chap. 6.
o need of your Friendship, then you 14, 15.
earied me with your Visits, and
ade me Sick with your fulsome Flat-
ries; when the secret of God was
on my Tabernacle, and the Blessings
f Heaven were richly shour'd upon
e every day, then you overflowed in
indness too: But now when I am
asted with Calamities, and parched
o with the scorching Flames of an
ngry God, and stand really in need
f your Succour and advice, then you
orly stand at an uncomfortable di-
ance from me; and rather then per-
rm the meanest act of Friendship:
ou heap fresh Troubles, to my alrea-
y insupportable Miseries, by Perse-
uting him whom God hath smitten,

and

and vexing him whom the Almig
hath wounded. To him that is a
fted Pity should be shewn from
Friend, but my Brethren have d
Deceitfully, and forsaken the Fea
God, &c.

'Tis indeed a very Vanity to in
gine, that such People can ever p
form the least Office of *Sacred Frie*
ship, who, merely for their o
Advantage, court and fleer upon
in a *Calm*, and respect us no furt
than we can *assist or relieve* the
Such real *Friends* therefore
should endeavour to make to
selves, whose Abilities and Incli
tions equally concur to rescue or
fresh us in the roughest *Storms* a
Tempests: But certainly such *Frie*
are very rare and difficult to
found, and least of all amongst t
Great and Prosperous. Our *Sa*
our therefore adviseth not our Cou
ship to such; for it being so n
to an impossibility, that they the
selves should be saved, 'tis equal
impo

possible, that when *we fail they uld receive us into everlasting habi-tions:* But chiefly recommends to , the necessitous and afflicted, the edy and the out-casts, whose Pray-s and Intercessions for us, if we n either Purchase or Bribe at any te; even such forlorn and despi-ble Wretches, will be infinitely tter Advocates for us at the Throne Grace, then all the rich and ughty Men in the World. Those streſſed and forlorn People, that e have been compassionate and nd to here, will prove the best *actors* to Negotiate our Affairs a-ve, by laying up for us everlast-g *Funds*, and fixing us Banks that all be more durable then the very *eavens* themselves: They are the ithful Harbingers, that provide nd procure for us everlasting Ha-tations, when we must take an nwilling Farewel of all those in-eagling Pleasures, which have so equently Warp'd us from our Du-

ty

ty and our Intereſt. Tho' they m
by ſome, be look'd upon as lit
better then the *filth* and *off-ſcouri*
of the World, as the Holy Apoſt
before them were; yet when th
are Sanctified like the Angels the
ſelves, *they miniſter for them who ſh*
Heb. 1. 14. *be heirs of Salvation.*

Which wholſome Advice of o
Saviour, was look'd upon as ſuch
abſurdity in Divinity, by the ni
and ſupercilious *Phariſees*, that th
entertain'd the excellent Parable a
the divine Author of it with op
ſcorn and deriſion; they heard
theſe things and derided him (ἐξε
verſe 14. μυκτήριζον αὐτόν) they *made Mou*
at him, they treated him and his d
vine Doctrines at ſuch an unmanner
rate, as if they had been worth
other Notice, then their inſip
Drolls, and dull Grimmace.

To which ungenteel and ſcornf
way, of that bigotted and infatu
ted People, our *Lord*, without th
leaſt Commotion, tacitly replyeth

a warmer Application, in the owing Apologue; 'You think I perceive, to little purpoſe, and treamly beneath you, to purhaſe the Friendſhip of the Poor, erefore with your Patience, I ill adventure upon another Paable; There was a *certain rich an, which was cloathed in purple and ne Linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly very day*, who had a certain deſpiable, bnt pious *Beggar lying at is gate*, Petitioning for the Crumbs hat fell from his luſcious Table. *he rich man died and was in hell*; he poor Man was wafted by Anels into the *boſom of Abraham*: ad it not been exceedingly advangious to that great and opulent erſon, to have made himſelf a *riend by his unrighteous mammon*, y a ſeaſonable act of Charity, to uch a deplorable but ſanctified inſtance of Miſery, rather then in ell to *beg*, and to be *denied* a *drop f Water*.

Not

Not that I dare ſay, the *Poo*
all Caſes are able to be ſuch *Frie*
but this we are bold to recomm
to Men, from the beſt and the g
teſt Authority, that *God* of his
finite Goodneſs hath been pleaſe
undertake for them, and in the m
ſolemn manner hath engaged h
ſelf to repay all that Aſſiſtance
Compaſſion, which we ſhall ou
diſintereſſed Principles of Rel
on, beſtow upon any one that b
the *Image of God*, and the Hon
rable Character of a Chriſtian.
Prov. 19. 17, 18. *that hath pity upon the poor* (*Solo*
Matt. 19. 21. tells us) *lendeth to the Lord*, (
δανίζει, he lends upon Uſury.) A
a greater than *Solomon* hath m
plainly told us, that if we *give*
the poor, we ſhall have treaſures
Heaven. And theſe are no deſ
cable Encouragements, to be p
fuſe and prodigal in our Benefa
ons, when we ſhall ſit down a
calmly conſider, that whatever
of Mercy we ſhall perform to a
ſtreſ

treſſed and pious Chriſtian, ſhall have ſo certain, ſo ample and ſo eternal a Reward.

But that I may wholly confine my ſelf to my Text, and the *Parable* from which I borrowed it, we ſhall find five uſeful and excellent Circumſtances recommended to us, which I may call *the whole Duty of Charity.*

1. He *called his Lords Debtors:* *Verſe* 5. He did not coldly ſtay for a formal intreaty, and till their Neceſſities or importunities extorted a kindneſs from him; but what he did as to them, was voluntary, unconſtrained, and unexpected. Of *Abraham* and *Lot* 'tis ſaid, they purpoſely ſate in the doors of their Tents to call in *ſtrangers*; no need to ſtand and knock for Admittance, but thoſe venerable *Patriarchs*, prevented their petitions before they asked, and with a noble Charity, ſupplied their Neceſſities before they could diſcover them.

Observe it where we please, a *cl*
morous and *canting Petitioner*, stand
least of any in need of your *Su*
cour. *Cast thy bread upon the water*
Eccl. 11. 1. says *Solomon*, and *thou shalt find*
after many days; but cast it chief
upon the standing Waters, saith
Father; the running Streams, th
is, *strolling vagabonds* will shift we
enough for themselves; but they th
are necessitated to *stand still*, who
great modesty will rather suffer the
to *starve* than *ramble*, are most li
ble to *Putrefaction*, and always l
bour under severer Necessities, tha
such as *whine* and *wander* all the Na
tion over.

Not that I condemn Charity
any Person Breathing; but we mu
needs know, that some Objects
Compassion are to be preferred b
fore others; such are the more *p*
ous, the neareſt *Related*, and the mo
apparently Necessitous. St. *Paul*'s Ru
is, that we must do *good unto all me*
but especially to them that are
th

he *houſhold of faith.* But as for *vagrants* and *loyterers*, thoſe *Citizens of the World*, to purchaſe their *Friendſhip* by our *Mammon*, is o be their *Adverſaries* and our *own* oo. Wholſome, and if need be, evere *Correction* is fitter for *ſuch*, than n *Alms*, that ſo they may be *ſcourg-d* from their Neceſſities, and *Bride-vel'd* from their *Vices.* They are a eſt to our doors, the *Robbers* of hem that are really *indigent*; and ndeed the *diſhonour* and *ſcandal* of he *Engliſh* Nation: To *relieve* ſuch s to humor their *Luxury*, and not o ſhew our *Charity*; to be liberal o a *Villain*, is to defraud a *Saint*; nd to ſupport a uſeleſs *Drone*, is he higheſt act of *Cruelty*, rather than *ity*, becauſe 'tis the ready way to *uin* him in *Body* and *Soul.*

Gal. 6.

Dormit ſſertit R publice D ciplina.

I will but mention the Wiſdom nd Piety of *Jeruſalem*,, and indeed f all *Judea*, wherein a *Beggar* was ccounted a reproach to their holy *Religion*, and a ſhame to their *Na-*

tion, and yet as crowded with Peo ple as it was, a *Beggar* was not *found* becauſe not *allowed*, amongſt them Nor will I but *hint* to you the pi ous Boaſtings which we every where meet with in the *Apologies* of the firſt Champions for Chriſtianity who tho' they liv'd in an *age* o ſuch raging *Cruelties*, and *Perſecu tions*, that ſcarce any Chriſtian knew what was his own, yet they could give a bold Defiance to their *Ene mies*, to name one Perſon of the *Holy Faith* that lay in *Gaol* for an flagitious Crime, for *Debt*, or ſuf fered for want of *Relief*: The made that noble Army of *Martyrs* plainly tell their Perſecutors, tha they ſpent more upon their poore Brethren *in the ſtreets*, then the Heathens did upon *their Gods* in their *Temples*, and coſtly *Sacrifices*. Nay, with thoſe Primitive and ge rous Souls, 'twas laid upon Delin quents as a *Puniſhment*, and a *di graceful one too*, to be deny'd the

rtul. A- l. paſſim.

Honou

Honour of caſting their Money into the *Publick Treaſury*. But (as to the Caſe before us) St. *Paul* hath utterly obſtructed our Charity, and as it were, *hardned our hearts againſt ſuch People*, whoſe Neceſſities are the effect of pure *Lazineſs*. *He that will not labour, let him not eat*, i. e. let him not be relieved. And as for the pious and ſober *Chriſtian*, who by ſome ſtern *Providence* is really reduced to want and Penury, if we ſhut up our *Bowels of Compaſſion from him*, 'tis as plain, from another *Apoſtle*, that we forfeit all our Intereſt in our Chriſtianity, and have not a dram of the *Love of God* remaining in us.

2 *Theſ.* 3. 10.

1 *John* 3 17.

2. The next no leſs neceſſary Circumſtance that muſt accompany our Charity, than that which went before, is, that what he did was done *nimbly* and with *diſpatch*; *ſit down quickly*, and make your own terms. God, ſays St. *Paul*, *loveth a cheerful giver*. The wiſer *Heathens*

Verſe 6.

Cor. 9. 7. observed, that their *Republick* ne-
ver reaped the least *Benefit* by offer-
ing a Sacrifice, when the Beast vio-
lently shun'd the *Altar*, and must b
drag'd to it by perfect force. An
'tis most certain, that *God* who g
ames. 1. 5. veth *liberally to all men, and upbrai-
eth not*, loveth a cheerful Count-
nance in the giver; and 'tis the
that he is best pleased with the Gif
'tis the very *Salt* that seasons o
Charity, and without which it ca
not be acceptable to *him*, who sho
ers down so many and daily *Bl
sings* upon us, *Blessings* unask'd fo
and undeserved. *Whilst we ha
time*, or opportunity, *let us do go
unto all men*; and 'tis plain, th
we have no time but the pr
sent.

John 13. 27. 29. *What thou dost do quickly*, said o
Saviour to *Judas*, which was a pr
verbial Speech, by which he jeer
that infamous *Traytor* with his i
tended Villany; but was unde
stoo

ſtood by the Diſciples, of his giving ſome ſpeedy *Alms* to the poor, upon that extraordinary occaſion, becauſe he carried the common ſtock, and was the *unjuſt*, but *unwiſe Steward* of his Maſters Bounty.

'Tis a ſordid, a ſtingy Charity, to part with nothing till we dye; 'tis in effect to ſay, that we dare not truſt *God* himſelf with what we have, till we can't keep it any longer our ſelves; but perfect *Charity caſteth out this fear* above all other, and can generouſly truſt the great *Benefactor* of the World with all; for 'tis but parting from that which we cannot keep; and therefore 'tis no ſmall inſtance of our Prudence, to make our own Eyes our *Overſeers*, and our own Hands the *Executors* of every thing we deſign ſhould be done, for *God*, the *Church*, or our *fellow Chriſtians*; for he that giveth not till he dies, would not then perhaps if he could help it; and in ſuch a Caſe, whatſoever he bequeaths

may indeed be his *last Testament*, but in propriety of speaking, can scarce be called his *last Will.*

3. Consider the extent of the *Steward's* Policy, he called *every one* of his Lord's Debtors. A perfect Christian Charity knows no Bounds, but is as Universal and Catholick, as the *Church of God* it self. To heap up all our Liberality upon *one*, is to injure and defraud all the rest. Therefore 'tis our *Prudence*, and 'twill be no less our *Interest*, so to contrive our *Benefactions*, as that it may be diffusive, and so do most good. 'Tis a mistaken piece of *Charity*, to confer all our Liberality upon one or two, and suffer the rest to starve at our doors. *Hence* *David* therefore when he is studiously deciphering the Character of a *Righteous Man*, adds this as one main Circumstance to make him such; *dispersit & dedit*, He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the Poor. *Psal.* 112. 9.

A prudent *Distribution* of our Alms, is infinitely more acceptable, than a partial *Accumulation*. To make one *Pauper* rich, with a total neglect of all the *rest*, is a miserable *obedience* to the great Precept of doing good to all Men: And if it be a *fulfilling the Law in one point*, 'tis a plain *violation* of it in another. Every distressed Member of the *Church* bears the same *Image of God*, and is redeemed with the costly price of the same *unvaluable Blood*; It must therefore be a sort of *Sacrilege*, to enrich *one*, and coldly to disregard *all others*: But like the *Sun* we must scatter our Light and kind Influences upon the whole Field, and not poorly shine upon an *Acre* of Ground only: Then it is that we truly perform an acceptable act of *Charity*, when we lay a Foundation *for a publick good*, and do something that *Posterity* may be the better for, then we have the *Honour* to be accounted *Benefactors* to the World's

World's *great Lord and Master*, an
Creditors of the *Redeemer of Man*
kind. The greater extent our Cha
rity takes, the more *Advocates* w
make for us at the *Throne of Grace*
and look, *whatsoever we lend*
him, shall be paid us again: A
Cyrus was wont to say, that he accu
mulated better Treasures for himsel
than those he parted with, by ma
king his *Friends* rich, and cantonin
out his Bounty amongst his *Depen*
dents and *Followers*; so we, whe
our *Abilities* are great, are obliged
not only by our *Holy Faith*, but
point of *Common Prudence*,
make as many *Friends* with ou
Mammon, as 'tis possible, for th
satisfaction of having been helpf
and beneficial to *Mankind*, does n
only beget us an outward *Esteem* an
Veneration from all *good Men*; bu
affords such internal *Delights*, an
constant Cerenity of Soul, as infinit
ly transcend all the sensual *Pleasur*
in the World: And what is mo
ye

yet, the good and wiſe *God* is pleaſed to repay our Charity beyond a reach of Humane *Intereſt*, with *a hundred fold in this World, and in the World to come with Everlaſting Life.*

4. From *this Wiſe Steward* we learn another excellent *Rule*, to direct our *Charity* by; for we find him, tho' dealing very generouſly, yet proportionably to the ſeveral Neceſſities of his Maſter's Debtors, to ſome more, to ſome leſs. And yet for this I confeſs we have no certain *Rule*, becauſe the Duty recommended to us, is not to be cut by a Thread as Juſtice is; only in general we learn, that where the Bounty of *Heaven* hath bleſt us with abundance, our *Charity* to the Indigent, muſt bear ſome proportion to our own *Abilities*, as well as to their *Neceſſities*; According to that a Man hath, is St. *Paul*'s Rule; and he that being ſo bleſt, ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly: where

2 *Cor.* 8. *Chap.* 9.

that

that great Apostle intimates, th
the variety of Abilities which Me
enjoy, make it unfit, and almost im
possible to prescribe any *certain Sum*
only 'tis our Interest to give as muc
as we can honestly spare, witho
being manifestly injurious to *o*
selves, and *our Families*. In th
sense only our Proverb is true, th
Charity begins at home; for he th
giveth to others, more than he
able to spare from his own *just Ne*
cessities, must needs fall under th
blunt Character of a *Fool* or a *Mad*
man; a *Charitable* Person being usu
ally compared to a *Cistern*, that re
tains a good quantity of Water fo
it self, and not to a Pipe whic
lets all run through it. We mus
take such care for other People's safe
ty, as never to destroy our own
And if we kindly reach out ou
Hands to preserve another fro
Drowning, we must take heed t
stand firm our selves, lest we also
Perish for Company.

5. The

5. The Diſcretion and Policy in the management of his declining fortunes is remarkable; he abated the greateſt Proportion to ſuch, as in all probability would afford him the greateſt kindneſs when he ſhould be turn'd out of his gainful Office. St. *Paul*'s is excellent Advice, when he bids us do *ſome good to all Men*, but more to *them that are of the houſhold of faith*; becauſe Diſcretion is well as Religion obligeth us, to be more peculiarly aſſiſting to them, whoſe known Worth and Piety may ſtand us in the greateſt ſtead, in a day of diſtreſs; and whoſe Prayers for us will find the eaſieſt admittance, and the readieſt acceptance at the *Throne of Grace*. And we have all the Aſſurance that Heaven can give, that our dear Redeemer for their ſakes, will make us Deniſons of the *Jeruſalem* that is above; will Tranſlate us from the reeking Sediment of this lower World, to *everlaſting Habitations*; and from being *Verſe 6,*

So-

Sojourners and Pilgrims here, t
be *Kings and Prieſts to him for ever*
more. And oh, how valuable ough
ſuch Advocates to be, however de
ſpicable here? whoſe Prayers an
Interceſſions can raiſe us to ſuc
illuſtrious Preferments hereafter!

This is the whole Subſtance o
the Parable, and theſe are the Me
thods propoſed by our Saviour fro
it, whereby to *make to our ſelve*
friends of the unrighteous Mammon
which was my firſt particular. Th
ſecond is

II. An honeſt Iuduſtry in procurin
ſuch Friends, and the means and in
ſtruments by which they may be pro
cured; and that is, *by the Mammo*
of unrighteouſneſs.

They that liſt, may find a gre
deal of duſt and uſeleſs noiſe, rais
by Interpreters and Criticks, abou
the Original and Signification o
this word *Mammon*, which woul
be as vain in me to repeat, as 'twoul
be harſh and tedious for you t
hear

ear; our own beſt Tranſlators, in he Margent of your Bibles, have old us it ſignifieth *Riches*, and I will trouble my ſelf no further. Nor is it worth your while to e told, why 'tis ſtiled by this odious Epithet, of *unrighteous Mammon.*

Make to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs. This eems to be the higheſt abſurdity, a Riddle, and at firſt view, next door o an Impoſſibility. For can we ſuppoſe it poſſible, or ſo much as probable, that we can bribe or purhaſe the Friendſhip of *Heaven*, by Fortune that hath been violently Extracted from Widows Tears and Orphans Groans? Can that *Holy God*, who is of purer Eyes then to behold Iniquity, be pleaſed, when we offer an *Abomination for a Sacri-* *Iſa. 66.3.*
ce? No, it muſt be the higheſt affront imaginable, to ſuppoſe the *Lord our Righteouſneſs*, to be a Patron of Knaves and Villains, a Sanctuary

ctuary for Cheats and commo
Rogues, and a Broker to recei
ſtollen Goods. God forbid that
ny Man ſhould ſo think.

And yet I confeſs in one Caſe
where an Eſtate hath been haſti
and unjuſtly gotten, a good propo
tion of it muſt of neceſſity be b
ſtowed upon Pious and Charitab
Uſes, otherwiſe the acquirers of
can have but ſmall hopes of a be
ter Life when this is done. I ſa
in *one Caſe*; but alas, 'tis juſtly
be feared it is the Caſe of too man
in this declining and tottering Ag
of Chriſtianity: For how man
Phariſaical Votaries, by the ſpec
ous Pretence of *long Prayers*, hav
devoured *Widows Houſes*; An
how many under the Vizor of gre
ter Sanctimony, have ſwept awa
whole Families into their *Corban*
how many that have amaſs'd to them
ſelves a ſudden Fortune, by palp
ble Fraud and Injuſtice? and ſ
long practiſed the *Trade* and *Myſt*

Cheating; that if it would save their Souls, they cann't call to remembrance the Persons whom they have Wronged and Ruined perchance.

'Tis in such a Case that we must bestow what we have so injuriously squeez'd out of the Wrecks of other Men, as near as 'tis possible, as they would or should have done themselves; for we must needs know, that they would not have made us or ours their Legatees; and till we have unloaded our Souls from the guilt of such a horrid injustice, 'tis very much in vain to expect Remission of our Sins: for I take it to be an undoubted Truth, that God does not usually forgive any Man, to the wrong and utter undoing of a third Person, and his Posterity for ever.

However, I am sure 'tis a most unaccountable Presumption, for a Man that hath by open Violence, or secret Fraud, reduced his Neighbour

to Beggary, and turn'd his Posteri naked into the inhospitable Worl to come at last, and cry *God Me cy*; and to conclude of his Salva on, without making some Satisfac on or Acknowledgment to the Pe son or Family wrong'd.

That trite Rule is as true as ol *Non remittitur peccatum nisi restitu tur oblatum*; no Forgiveness can expected, without some Restitut on made for the Trespass. And th Man must have a wretched Opinio of God and Religion, who thin to step so easily out of this Worl into the Everlasting Joys of an ther, whilst his Soul is loaded an polluted with the Spoyls and Tr phies of his Rapine and Injusti In order therefore to compleat o Peace *with God*, before we go hen to be no more seen, we must ma as full a Restitution as 'tis possible and if none can be remembred be found, then follows that oth Rule, *acquisisti malo impende jam b*

t, what thou haſt thus fraudulently ſcraped together, take care that be beſtowed ſo, as ſhall beſt promote the *Honour of God*, the Good of his *Church*, and the juſt Succour of diſtreſſed *Chriſtians*. And thus we may make *to our ſelves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs*, in the very Letter of the Parable.

And let me add, that they who under the *Goſpel*, are not thus diſpoſed to reſtore, in ſome meaſure, what they have ſo injuriouſly Exorted from others, as they condemn the ſafer Practiſe of that honeſt *Publican*, *who reſtored four-fold to every one that he had wrong'd*; ſo they ſhamefully fall ſhort, even of that *Traytor*'s Conſcience, who with Remorſe that ſunk him into Hell for Sanctuary, *brought back the thirty pieces of Silver*, the infamous Price of the Redeemer of Mankind. L. 19. 8.

Tho' this Doctrine be a most infallible Truth, yet I confess it lies not in the design of the *Parable* for every one knoweth that Restitution is an Act of Justice, but the Parable aims at Charity only. Now if this Steward, whose Prudence (not his Dishonesty) is recommended to us by our *Saviour*, had fairly stated the Accounts betwixt the *Lord* and the several Debtors; if he had acted upon the Square, and not dodged with his Master, by abating them considerable Sums, how could he have expected any future Kindnesses from them? His Liberality therefore wrought them into a grateful Compassion of him, and of Liberality it must be understood; by this he *made to himself friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness.*

And yet as *unrighteous* as they are, our *Lord* hath piously exhorted us to find *Honey in this Lion*, and Extract an Antitode out of Poi-

on it self, which is the third and last part of my Task.

III. The end and Motive to good Works, from the vast Rewards that attend them hereafter, everlasting Habitations. And here again we meet with three very material Particulars; 1. The unspeakable Rewards of Charity; 2. The nick and season when they shall be bestowed upon us; when *ye* fail, or when *it*, *Mammon*, fails. 3. By whose means we shall be *received into these everlasting Habitations: They* shall receive you.

1. The Rewards of Charity; which being a Noble Theme, and a particular too Copious to be now enlarged upon, I shall but just touch at it.

The great and wise King hath told us, that *Riches* are of that uncertain Nature, that *they make themselves wings, and fly away* towards Heaven: And if we canwisely Prov. 23.

trim their Plumes, ſo as to mak
them ſoar ſuch a lofty flight, t
that glorious place let them fly i
God's Name. If our Alms and Ob
lations aſcend thither for a Memo
rial, we are for ever bleſt, beyon
all that can be expreſt or conceiv'd
for then they are ſafely lodged fo
us in that everlaſting Treaſury, whe
neither *moth nor ruſt can corrupt*, an
where they ſhall be for ever ſecu
from Depredations, and out of th
reach of Violence.

Riches accumulated, and parc
moniouſly hoarded up, to gratif
a tenacious Humour, are altogeth
uſeleſs, and utterly loſt whilſt we liv
and muſt be eternally parted fro
when our *Lord* calls upon us to gi
up our Account. But whatſoever
given in *the name of a Diſciple*, w
are aſſured ſhall encreaſe to a *hu
dred fold.* Our Bread and o
Alms, when piouſly diſtributed t
Prov. 11. 24. the deſerving and neceſſitous Me
bers of Chriſt, increaſeth by bei
dim

diminished; and thus to bestow our Wealth is to augment it; like those few Loaves our Saviour distributed to the hungry Multitude; it Multiplieth, not only as they, to the Bread that *Perisheth*, but unto *Everlasting Life.* John 6.

I dare not say, that good Works can purchase or merit Heaven; for when we have done the best we can, we must humbly bow our Heads and say, we are *unprofitable Servants*; yet that's a Doctrine dandled and justified by some, when indeed 'tis fitter to be Exploded then Confuted. No! only the unvaluable Blood and meritorious Sufferings of our *dear Redeemer*, and our Faith in him, can make us acceptable in the sight of *God.*

Yet this I dare modestly aver, that if any one Christian Virtue can ascertain to us *Everlasting Habitations*, and enfeofe us in the *Mansions above*, 'tis that of a Holy and generous Compassion to the distres-

sed Members of our *Common Savi-our.* And if the good we do, pro-ceeds from a disinterested Affectio to the *Church of God*, and an en-tire Faith to the *Holy Jesus*; bo our Works and our selves shall b justified in an eternal Reward before the whole World of Me and Angels, at the great day of Re-tributions.

'Tis true, we are adapted Sons o *God*, and made Heirs of Everla ing Salvation, meerly through th infinite Merits of our Lord an Saviour, and we are justified b Faith in him alone; but 'tis as tru that Charity and good Works San-ctifie us; these put Life and Ene-gy into our Holy Profession, an make that Faith kindly Thrive an Flourish into *Everlasting Life:* An all our noise about *Religion*, an
Cor. 13. 1. Faith, without *Charity* to enlive them, makes as harsh a Din, *sounding Brass, or tinkling Cymbal* Without good Works our *Religio*

is vain, and our *Faith is dead*, and can no more perform any regular Actions, than a Body that lieth in Putrefaction and Diffluency can arise and walk. Nay, 'tis by this *more excellent way* (as St. *Paul* calls it) that we shall be Glorified hereafter, as well as Sanctified here: And we are put into a Capacity to do all this good to our selves and others, by this *Mammon of Unrighteousness*. *James* 17. 1 *Cor.* 1 31.

Strange! but true, that uncertain Riches by our Religious Management of them, will procure for us a sure and certain Reward; and the *Mammon* of *Unrighteousness*, a *Crown of Righteousness*; otherwise St. *Paul* had in vain commanded his Son *Timothy*, to exhort the Opulent and Wealthier Christians, to do good, and to be rich in good Works; to be ready to distribute, and willing to Communicate, that by these Methods they might lay up in store for themselves a 1 *Tim.* 18, 19.

good Foundation against the time to come, and so lay hold on Eternal Life.

2. But all this vast reward lies in a cold Reversion, and when shall we be actually Possessed of it? When *we fail*, says the Text; when we really stand in the greatest, and, as yet, unconceivable Want; when, like this *Steward*, we are to be stript of all our glorious Pretences, and by Death to be turn'd shivering and trembling out of this Life; when we are to go Naked out of the *World*, as ever we came *into it*, and be hurried to that impartial Tribunal, to account how we have employed our Talents, where our mighty Treasures will afford but cold Comfort to our guilty Souls; and where our Corn will not be Nourishing, nor our Gold Restorative.

We want not Instances of *great* and *righteous* Persons too, whose Estates and Honours have Vanish-

ed

ed away like a ſhadow, and inſenſibly Melted, like Snow, betwixt their Fingers, in the Prophet's Elegant Compariſon; witneſs that one day, that ſaw *Job* the greateſt Man in the *Eaſt*, and one of the moſt afflicted, the moſt neceſſitous, and Calamitous Perſon in the World: Nor need we rifle ancient *Records*, and tumble over the Hiſtories of other *Nations*, for Inſtances of the like Nature; our own *Kingdom*, and our own *Memories* afford us but too ſad an Inſtance of it in the *unchriſtian* and more than *Barbarous uſage* of King *Charles* the *Martyr*, undoubtedly one of the moſt virtuous and innocent *Princes* that ever ſate upon the Throne of our *Iſrael*: Yet notwithſtanding his Divine Character, and Celebrated *Piety*, beyond all Examples of former Ages, he was Plundered of the common Neceſſaries of *Life*; had his Wife and Children violently torn from his Boſom, and at laſt Barba-

rouſly Murdered by a parcel of *ungodly Men*, before the Gates of his own Royal Palace; and I pray God that his Blood be not upon us and our Children to this day!

By theſe Inſtances we ſee, that there is ſome truth in the Text, as 'tis read by the *Syriack*, *Mammon will fail us; that when it fails.*

And from ſuch illuſtrious Examples of Suffering Piety, let us, as they did, take exceeding Care leſt that terrible doom which the *Apoſtle* paſt upon *Simon Magus*, ſhould be our unhappy *Lot* alſo, *Thy money periſh with thee.*

But our Tranſlation is more natural, which reads, *When ye fail.* And indeed, though our Poſſeſſions, Eſtates and Honours poſſibly may ſurvive us, yet this plain Truth hourly Experience is Preaching to us, that *We muſt fail*, and ſuddenly too. And then this

with

with the help of another *Parable*, tells us, that at the best we are but *Stewards*, entrusted by the great Landlord of the World with our several Talents, for which we shall be once called to a rigid Account; which if we prudently and conscienciously imploy, to the Honour of our *great Lord and Master*, and the best advantage of our *fellow Christians*, we gain no less than an Eternal Kingdom by them: And fail we shall, when Death shall Summon us hence into a vast and boundless Eternity; and then 'tis, that we shall want something that's as great and durable as our *immortal Souls* are; when our *Riches cannot profit in a day of Wrath*; nor our sorrowful and parting Friends comfort so much as *themselves*, much less *us*; nor shall we have any thing to rely upon but these *good Works*, which will *follow* and accompany us; inseperably adhere to us to the very end of our Journey,

and

and vigorously assist and intercede for us, when all other hopes and helps shall fail us: Our Works and our *Alms* especially shall follow us, tho' not formally and in kind, yet in the unconceivable Compensations of another Life; which brings me to my last particular.

3. By whose means we shall be thus Enstated in Glory, and who shall receive us. They, that is the Poor, as all Interpreters both Ancient and Modern agree.

The Poor! Lord, can they help us to Everlasting Habitations, who, like their *Humble Saviour*, have not *where to lay their Heads?* Can they that are the *Reproaches* of the World, and the *Scorn* of Mankind, procure us *Friends* in such a glorious place as *Heaven* is! Yes, if they are sober, pious, and a People that serve and fear *God*; they are the best *Friends* that we can make, and next to our *blessed Saviour*, the most effectual Advocates that we can imploy

ploy to Sollicit our Cause above; for when *we* and our *Mammon* too *shall fail*, like *God* himself, in this sense, they will *never leave us nor forsake us*, till they have obtained our Pardon, and see us safely lodged in a happy *Eternity*.

So runs the Final Sentence, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; for I was a hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in, I was naked and ye cloathed me, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me.* We could not possibly perform such acceptable Services to our *Blessed Saviour*, in his own Person; therefore he adds, *Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Matt. 25. 34 to v. 4

Our

Our *deareſt Lord* is pleaſed to own all our Kindneſſes to his affliƈted and indigent Members, as if they had been actually beſtowed upon himſelf, when he Diſrobed himſelf of his *Divinity*, and came to recover an *undone World* in the Rags and Infirmities of our Humane Nature. And thoſe *Beeds-men*, whoſe Prayers and Interceſſions for us we have thus wiſely purchaſed, are ſaid to *receive* us into *thoſe Everlaſting Habitations*, which *he* only can beſtow and not *they*. If we give but a cup of *cold Water*, *in the name of a Diſciple*, our Saviour in a moſt ſolemn Aſſeveration hath aſſured us it *ſhall not loſe its Reward*. Thoſe pious Chriſtians to whom we have done the leaſt good, in the Name and for the ſake of the Holy *Jeſus* either by our Wealth or Counſel, or Comfort; or by a Conſcientiou

entious Management of that Truſt which is repoſed in us by pious Benefactors, ſhall teſtifie what we have done before the *Eternal Judge*, and give their Suffrage to tha Sentence which ſhall enſtate us in never fading Glories; they ſhall be living Teſtimonials of our good Works, before all the Inhabitants that ever have been on Earth, or are in Heaven; and with one Heart and Voice, ſhall Eccho forth the Praiſes of that Righteous Judge, when he *Receiveth us into Everlaſting Habitations.*

I willingly confeſs, that the Joys of that other Life, infinitely Tranſcend all the beſt Performances; and that the Scripture, and our Church, agreeably to that Golden Rule, declare, *That Eternal Life is purely the free Gift of God*; yet it is a Gift that he will confer upon his *Friends*, and they Rom. 6. 23

John 15. 4. are *his friends who keep his Commandments*, and the *greateſt of his Commands is Charity*, (1 *Cor.* 13. 13.) So that (God be praiſed) we have Cogent Arguments enough to ſpur us on to a Holy Charity, without the crafty Engines of pretended *Merit* to ſqueeze it from us. And yet I dare ſay, that upon the honeſt Orthodox Principles of the *Church* of *England*, there have been greater and nobler Endowments of this nature ſince the Reformation, then were ſcreened out of People by ſuch poor deviſes, in ſome Centuries before. And this County affords us ſo many Modern Inſtances of it, as may for ever ſilence thoſe People, whoſe Ignorance or Malice hath made them repreſent our excellent Church as depretiating good Works, and teaching, that *they are not neceſſary in order to our Salvation.*

Before

Before ever this Doctrine of Merit was trumped up by a *Corrupt Church*, to wheedle Men out of their *Fortunes* and their *Wits*, 'twould amaze us to hear how univerſally Helpful and Charitable the *Primitive Chriſtians* were one towards another; when not a Member of the Church, but was ſuccoured and ſupported under all his Neceſſities; when the richer ſort would Viſit and Relieve the Impriſoned and Condemned, though 'twas little leſs than Death to do it: And Honourable Matrons thought it no Diſparagement to their Birth and Breeding, to attend as Nurſes on the Sick, and wipe and dreſs the Wounds and ulcerous Sores of a Suffering Confeſſor: And this Exemplary Love and conſpicuous Charity was that, which won ſo many in ſo ſhort a time, to fall down Proſelytes to the *Chriſtian Faith.*

But both the Duty and the Rewards of it are ſufficiently believed; only we are apt to huſh down the *yearnings of our Bowels*, and the dictates of our Religion and Conſcience, by *thrifty* Objections and *ſtingy* Scruples; *viz.* How is it poſſible I ſhould diſtinguiſh thoſe that are poor and pious too, from Hypocrites and Cheats? Which is eaſily reſolved, if we diligently mark but that one Text of our Savi-
Matt. 5. 3. our, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* So that the Perſon who is perhaps extreamly in want, and yet extreamly vitious, whoſe Neceſſities are accompanied with Envy and Saucineſs towards his Betters and Superiors, whoſe Poverty is the pure effect of his Sins and Lazineſs, and the Sins that have Ruined him continued and delighted in: He that is a ſtrol-

ling

ling *Saunterer* and a *Sot*, as ſuch, deſerve due Correction rather than any Relief or Countenance, ſo they can never *receive us into Everlaſting Habitations.*

In Fine, as in all our Actions, ſo more peculiarly in our Benefactions, we muſt prudently alloy the *Innocency of the Dove*, with the *Wiſdom of the Serpent*; make as diſcreet a Choice as 'tis poſſible, of proper Objects for our Benevolence; and pray for, and hope the beſt of all. And if it ſhould ſo fall out (as God knoweth, it too often doth) that we have been deceived and impoſed upon; tho' what we ſhould beſtow with a truly Celeſtial Piety, and our utmoſt Caution, ſhould be perverted, abuſed and imbezzelled, to ſinful and unworthy purpoſes; yet every generous Benefactor, to Poſterity,

hath this for his Motto, and his Comfort too, *Charitatis Error ſalutaris eſt*; 'tis an Errour of the Right Hand, and an advantagious miſtake; for what we do is out of pure Conſcience to the Holy Precepts of our Redeemer; and if we have been unhappily miſtaken in our choice of proper Objects, yet that cannot make void the Piety, or leſſen the Reward of our Deſign.

Nay, I will admit the worſt that can be ſuppoſed, that their Prayers for whom we have made ſo plentiful a Proviſion, through their ungrateful Vices and Follies ſhould be turned into Sin, yet as the Blood of Righteous *Abel* was no ſooner ſhed, then it ſent up loud Cries to Heaven againſt his unworthy Brother, for his Clandeſtine and Inhumane Fratricide; ſo our pious and well-meant

meant Alms-deeds, ſhall take as ſpeedy and as lofty a Flight, into the Preſence of God, and earneſtly intercede for us at the *Throne of Grace*; for ſo runs the happy Tidings that the Angel brought devout *Cornelius*, not thy Prayers only, but thy *Alms are come up for a memorial before God.* Acts 10.

Without Charity God accepts not of the loudeſt Prayers; but when theſe two Celeſtial Duties, kindly conſpire together, and meet like ſcattered Rays in an Optick, they make the richeſt Sacrifice that poor Man can preſent to his Maker: They are an *Odour* (ſays the Apoſtle) of a ſweet *ſmell, acceptable, and well pleaſing to God.* Heb. 13. 16. Prayer indeed is a Duty that we owe, whether to God or our ſelves moſt, is, perhaps hard to determine; but 'tis Charity that muſt invigorate it,

and give it wings to ſoar aloft, even *to theſe Everlaſting Habitations*. And what are Alms but a viſible and more durable Prayer, which aſcend and dwell there, with better acceptance, then all the coſtlier and repeated Sacrifices amongſt the Jews. Theſe Duties, when they are piouſly Conjoyn'd, do in a manner Charm the Almighty into a Kindneſs and Complacency; with the Patriarch *Jacob*, they offer him a Holy Violence, and, as it were, conſtrain him to bleſs us before they will *let him go*.

O the Bleſſed, the unconceiveable Returns of Love and Compaſſion to our fellow Chriſtians! by which our *Bread to the Hungry* ſhall be rewarded with hidden *Manna*; and a cup of *cold Water*, in the Name of a *Diſciple*, be Recompenſed with *Rivers of Living Water*; they that have

have *Cloathed the Naked*, ſhall be *cloathed with Robes of Immortality*, that have *taken in Strangers* ſhall be received into *Everlaſting Habitations*; and for *viſiting* Captives and *Priſoners* ſhall be kept out of *Eternal Chains*; and our Viſiting the *Sick* ſhall be made good to us in Everlaſting *Health* and Salvation.

'Tis Charity that hath Embalmed the Memories of the Righteous to grateful and diſtant Poſterity; 'tis this that hath preſerved their Names when all other Records of Time have been loſt and periſhed; when their Tombs have been defaced and buried, and all their coſtly *Rubbiſh* turned to Duſt. This is the very *Milky way* that leadeth directly to the Palaces of Glory, and the Regions of Eternal Happineſs.

'Tis

'Tis this that hath *Canonized* all the generous Souls of former Ages, who for their publick Benefactions, are owned and admired almost to *Adoration*. 'Tis this that maketh all People, that have not lost all Relish of *Religion* and common *Humanity*, to cast a Mantle over all their Frailties and Infirmities; and (I had almost said) 'tis Charity that Compounds for all their Miscarriages, both with *God* and Man.

And what shall I say more, but what St. *Paul* says when he breaks off and Concludes his inimitable Eulogie of Faith, The *time would fail me* to tell you of all the Excellencies and Eternal Rewards of Charity. Heb. 11.

I shall only therefore crave leave to close up this plain and homely Discourse, with an excellent *Collect* of our Church, which being

being unanimously and sincerely darted up to Heaven, may make these mean endeavours of mine pass off with better Acceptance to *God* and your selves.

Let us Pray.

O *Lord who hast taught us, that all our Doings without* Charity *are nothing worth; send thy* Holy Ghost, *and pour into our Hearts that most Excellent Gift of* Charity, *the very* Bond *of* Peace, *and of all Virtues; without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: Grant this for thy only Son Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with thee O* Father, *and the*

Collect Quinqua ges. *Sun*

the Holy Ghost, *be ascribed by us and thy whole Church, all Honour and Glory now and for ever more.* Amen.

FINIS.